



Challenges for the New Rurality

In a changing world

Proceedings from the
7th International Conference on
Localized Agri-Food Systems

Editors
Paulina Rytönen & Ursula Hård

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Innovations, Synergies and Conflicts in the Territorial Development in the Brazil Cerrado

Claudia de Souza¹ & Claire Cerdan²

Abstract – This paper aims to assess the coexistence of rural development models (agribusiness / national parks / local communities) and to reflect on the potentiality of alternative strategies based on the production of local and traditional products and agro-ecology by rural communities, who mobilize practical knowledge and skills to promote traditional products and build alternative markets.

Keywords: innovation; agri-food systems; Cerrado; family farmers

INTRODUCTION³

Cerrado is a vast tropical Savanna ecoregion located in the centre of Brazil. This previously little-known area mostly used for intensive farming and agribusiness due to forms of mechanization well-adapted to that terrain, was promoted as a biome and became an issue of environmental concern at the beginning of the 2000s (Aubertin & Pinton, 2013). Today the territory is still regarded as the country's 'grain basket' (soy, maize, meat) and used as a way to protect Amazonia's deforestation by means of, for example, the agreement, also called *Soy Moratorium*. In this agreement, the biggest grain exporter associations have pledged not to trade and finance soybean from deforested areas within the Amazonian Biome (Gibbs et al., 2015). However, this moratorium does not apply to the Cerrado area where the soybean continues to be an important driver. This may explain why almost 50% of the natural vegetation of the Brazilian Cerrado has disappeared over the last 30 years (1980-2010). Several trends and development models are therefore coexisting: competitive agribusiness, integrally protected areas and local communities.

Our paper aims to assess how sustainable is the coexistence of rural development models: agribusiness, national parks (Brazil, 2002) and local communities. How are these different models coexisting? What are the economic alternatives for family farmers and rural communities? In the first part of this article we analyse the historical transformation of the territory. In the second section, we show how different models interact through an analysis of rural strategies. In the third part we reflect on new

opportunities for the communities linked to the valorization of biological diversity products of the Cerrado, such as jam, fruit pulp, fruit purée.

METHODS AND SOURCES

The study is based on fieldwork conducted in the western part of Bahia in 2015, one of the regions most impacted by Brazilian policy incentives given to agribusiness, from the 1980s onwards (Sousa Sobrinho, 2012). Two rural communities were selected. One of them is in a wildlife protected area (a conservation unit) and the other one is based on the surrounding area. These rural communities rely on agriculture and livestock as their main subsistence activities and as a form of wage labour. The history of family farmers who live in the communities and of the transformation in local agricultural practices was collected during walks, conversations, meetings and open interviews with the families. Initially, the changes described highlighted the dynamic aspect of the western part of Bahia in recent decades. In order to systematize the information, we use the concept of "developmental trajectory". The fieldwork was complemented with an analysis of private and public policy programs, which aim to preserve biodiversity and resources management. One of them was given special attention - The National Plan for the Promotion of Production Chains for Socio-Biodiversity Products.

RESULTS

The territorial trajectory: from agribusiness to the coexistence of the plurality of the projects.

The analysis of the historical transformation pointed to an evolution from a specialized model dominated by an actor (agribusiness) to a plurality of projects and initiatives supported by agribusinesses, local actors (private and public), local communities and civil society. Figure 1 presents three stages of the trajectory.

Figure 1 : Territorial Development Pathway

16th – 19th century	20 th century	21 st century
Portuguese colonization Extraction (precious stones, <i>Mangabeira</i> rubber) Migration dynamics	State supports modernization of agricultural Expansion with monoculture and irrigated area Expulsion of small agriculture New migration dynamic : 40,000 southerners in western Bahia	Creation of protected area (128 mil hectares). Introduction of GM crops 118 pivots installed in 12426.23 ha 2013 New environmental challenges: contamination of water springs by pesticides Erosion of permeable soils

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Several factors explain this territorial transformation. Natural and environmental conditions (river, climate, drought) are among the most important factors. They explain not only the early land occupation and the rapid expansion of the agriculture, but also the population dynamics (during sixteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries). Moreover, they explain also the public policies (agriculture modernisation, biodiversity preservation) and more recently, the market and the social demand for preservation and for local products, among other factors. Nowadays the region is experiencing numerous conflicts and/or witnessing different ways of coexistence of several development models.

How are local communities dealing with this evolution? According to the first results, the relation between small farmers and agroindustry is quite important. Four types of small farmers could be characterized. Some of them are workers in large farms (whether full or part-time). Others are more independent and have their own food production. The types are: Type 1: Family farmer and worker in agribusiness farms; Type 2: Family farmer and temporary worker in agribusiness farms; Type 3: Family farmer, civil servant and / or owner of small business; Type 4: Family farmer.

New challenges and new opportunities: exploring the growing demand for products of socio-biodiversity.

The region is currently facing social and environmental challenges (exclusion of small farmers, decrease of food production, pesticide contamination). Nowadays, rural communities are involved with new initiatives based on the valorisation of specific products. These initiatives are linked to activities on the part of social movements, which defend a new productive model for the Cerrado biome based on preservation of local resources or directly linked to the National Plan for the Promotion of Production Chains for Socio-Biodiversity Products. The latter is a recent initiative (2009) from the Brazilian Ministry of Environment (MMA), the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA), alongside the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) with other government agencies and NGOs. Socio-biodiversity consolidates biological diversity, traditional agricultural systems and the use and management of resources linked to traditional populations and family agriculture (Ipê, 2016). The idea is to strengthen the value chains of products originating in Brazilian ecosystems, through the creation of new mechanisms related to the use and marketing of products such as the Brazil nut (*Bertholletia excelsa*), açaí (*Euterpe oleraceae*) and the Cerrado Pequi (*Caryocar brasiliense*) or Bauru (*Dipteryx alata*). The main objective of this plan is to promote biodiversity conservation and to create a source of additional income for rural communities, especially for family farmers and traditional communities. These chains involve the production, processing, marketing and consumption of these products. In the region, some producers have initiated the pequi and baru valorisation process, mobilizing local knowledge for consumption and transformation. Today, both products are well accepted in urban

markets and sold through networks and alternative markets. Another effort focuses on school meal programs which also include some socio-biodiversity products. These public programs for biodiversity preservation or food security are being implemented by NGOs or local organizations, and family farmers have a good opportunity to consolidate and build the market networks. The impact of the program can be measured at the farmers' level and consumers' level (mainly in urban areas). From the producer's point of view, the research highlights that this socio-biodiversity policy program represents an opportunity to establish alternative markets. Recent market incentives for biodiversity and local products have three relevant impacts for local communities. (1) Economic effect: new income for local communities and market development; (2) Social and territorial impacts: the local communities have now "a voice" to participate in local governance; (3) Agricultural impacts: agro ecology management in the current production and transition systems.

CONCLUSIONS

Cerrado is a territory where several models for rural development are co-existing. Over the last 50 years, local communities faced several challenges. They had to adapt to or resist natural and climatic conditions, as well as specialization in the biome because of the industrialization of agricultural practices leading to soybean monoculture. While big landowners are quite familiar with more evolved techniques in this new model of production, many family farmers suffer exclusion, and contamination. In this context, recent efforts to promote alternative strategies based on local and traditional products and agro-ecology from rural communities seem to offer new alternatives, while helping local communities and policy makers to rethink the rural model for the Cerrado biome.

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